DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 436 050 EC 307 513

AUTHOR	Butterworth, John; Fesko, Sheila Lynch
TITLE	The Successes and Struggles of Closing a Facility-Based Employment Service.
INSTITUTION	Children's Hospital, Boston, MA. Inst. for Community Inclusion.
SPONS AGENCY	Administration on Developmental Disabilities (DHHS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1999-01-00
NOTE	6p.
CONTRACT	90DN0032
AVAILABLE FROM	Institute for Community Inclusion (UAP), Research and Training Center on State Systems and Employment, Children's Hospital, 300 Longwood Ave., Boston, MA 02115. Web site: <http://www.childrenshospital.org/ici>.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports - Evaluative (142)
JOURNAL CIT	Research to Practice; v5 n1 Jan 1999
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Change Agents; Change Strategies; *Community Programs; Data Collection; *Disabilities; Program Evaluation; Rehabilitation; Sheltered Workshops; *Social Integration; *Supported Employment

ABSTRACT

This brief paper reports on an evaluation of 10 community rehabilitation providers, six that successfully closed a facility-based program between 1989 and 1994, and four who are currently involved in a change process. Data collection consisted of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Findings indicated: (1) organizations were successful in closing a facility using either a gradual approach driven by individual consumers' job preferences or a rapid approach based on a specific closure date; (2) catalysts for change were primarily internal to the organization and in most cases multiple catalysts influenced the start of the change process; (3) leadership for the change process came from several different directions; (4) organizations which were successful in a change process had a strong culture that emphasized qualities like openness to risk taking, continuous evaluation and improvement of services, and clear and unwavering vision; and (5) organizations that are currently engaged in an organizational change process need to be careful to focus on a clear goal and not be distracted by the change process. Twelve recommendations are offered for organizations (e.g., invest in engaging and communicating with stakeholder groups) and five recommendations for external stakeholders (e.g., seek a place at the table during change planning). (DB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 436 050

INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1
JANUARY 1999

THE SUCCESSES AND STRUGGLES OF CLOSING A FACILITY-BASED EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

By

JOHN BUTTERWORTH &
SHEILA LYNCH FESKO

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

EC 307513

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ICI
INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION

Research to Practice

January 1999
Volume 5, Number 1

The Successes and Struggles of Closing a Facility-Based Employment Service

by John Butterworth & Sheila Lynch Fesko

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world, the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

George Bernard Shaw

Introduction

Over the past 15 years there have been substantial changes in the delivery and funding of day and employment services for individuals with disabilities. Most notably, the introduction of supported employment has led to a dramatic increase in the number of individuals with severe disabilities in integrated community employment. Despite these promising changes, the implementation of supported employment has not resulted in a transfer of resources and services from facilities to integrated employment. Data from state MR/DD agencies suggest that while the number of individuals supported in integrated employment has increased, the number in facility-based programs has remained steady or risen over the 8 years between 1988 and 1996 (Institute for Community Inclusion, 1998).

At the same time, it is clear that some organizations have successfully shifted emphasis from facility-based services to community employment, including closing a facility-based program. There is a need for a better understanding of the organizational and systems factors that influence organizational change in order to develop the capacity for change in the broader service system. This brief will present the preliminary findings from a study of ten community rehabilitation providers, six that successfully closed a facility-based program in the period between 1989 and 1994, and four who are currently involved in a change process. The goal of this research is to support organizations and systems in advancing access to integrated employment for all individuals.

Method

Participating organizations were selected using a combination of a national nomination process and results from a survey of 643 community rehabilitation providers in 20 states (McGaughey, 1994).

Organizations that Closed a Facility Based Program	Region	Location	Size
Bonney Enterprises • Corvallis, OR	Northwest	Suburban	Small
Community Enterprises • Northampton, MA	Northeast	Urban/Suburban/Rural	Large
LifeSkills Foundation • St. Louis, MO	Central	Urban	Large
UCPA of the Capitol Area • Austin, TX	South	Urban	Large
Independence Association • Brunswick, ME	Northeast	Suburban/Rural	Small
MetroWest Mental Health • Ashland, MA	Northeast	Suburban	Large
Organizations in Process			
Emory Valley Center • Oak Ridge, TN	South	Rural	Medium
Valley of the Sun School and Rehabilitation Center • Phoenix, AZ	Southwest	Urban	Large
The Ranch • Menomonee Falls, WI	Central	Urban/Suburban/ Rural	Medium
Rural Employment Alternatives • Conroy, IA	Central	Rural	Small

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EC 307513

Data collection consisted of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Primary data collection took place during a two-day site visit with each program. Site visitors interviewed representatives from each of the stakeholder groups to gain their perspectives on the conversion process. Stakeholder groups included at least staff, consumers, family members, board members, and funders.

Findings

Organizations were successful in closing a facility using either a gradual approach driven by individual consumers' job preference or a rapid approach based on a specific closure date.

Individually-driven change occurred gradually, one consumer at a time, and was characterized by an emphasis on person-centered planning. This approach was more clearly driven by what would benefit each individual. As a result, the change process was less stressful, and these organizations experienced very little resistance to change from families or other stakeholder groups. Organizations using the individual approach, however, did not always clearly communicate values to staff, consumers, and other constituents, and the change process could have been easily derailed by other forces such as funding or staffing. The approach also took much longer, in some cases.

"Don't tell people you're doing a conversion. Just use personal futures planning. Talk about people's dreams and goals. That will convert it. [Just] listen to what their dreams and goals are...If you really look at their lives and see how isolated they are, how impoverished they are and how they're going to continue to be, unless they have employment."

—agency staff member

Organizations that chose an organizationally-driven approach established a firm date for closure of the facility, communicated that decision clearly, and completed the closure much more rapidly. They typically found community employment more rapidly for a significant percentage of the individuals they support. The goals and intent of the organization were very clear to all stakeholders, and in some cases stakeholders had ample opportunity to participate in planning for the change. Organizations also displayed considerable creativity and experimentation as they sought to implement the change. The tradeoff for this speed and clarity of intent was a change process that was described, at times, as both stressful and chaotic.

Catalysts for change were primarily internal to the organization, and in most cases multiple catalysts influenced the start of the change process.

The organizations identified multiple factors that led to the decision to discontinue facility-based services. While the organizations typically identified a change in values as a primary variable, all identified additional variables including the presence of a new leader (executive director or president), an organizational financial crisis or new financial opportunities, and pressure from consumers to relocate services. It is notable that funders and state policy were rarely reported to be significant factors in the decisions of these organizations to change. An interesting contrast was that for those organizations which had already completed the conversion process, the catalysts were largely internal. However, for agencies in the process of converting their services, there were internal as well as external catalysts such as new grant monies and concern about competition from other providers in the area.

"The purpose was about everyone having a choice to make a meaningful contribution, not about closing the facility...I think we changed in spite of the system, not because of the system."

—agency executive director

Leadership for the change process came from several different directions.

While all of the organizations had clear leaders, the notion of a single, charismatic, top level leader driving change was not supported. Leadership occurred in a variety of ways in these organizations. Top level leaders were effective both as strong, visible individual leaders, and also in less visible, facilitative roles. Middle managers also played a critical role in the change process for several organizations. In two organizations, while

the need for change was defined by the executive director, middle managers championed the direction of the change process and led the move to close the facility.

Organizations which were successful in a change process had a strong culture that emphasized qualities like openness to risk taking, continuous evaluation and improvement of services, and clear and unwavering vision.

The original six organizations which successfully closed a facility-based program had a strong and well-defined culture that emphasized clear shared values, innovation, and a willingness to take risks. These supportive cultures were developed and maintained by a variety of concrete methods including aggressive strategies for sharing values with staff, outreach to both local resources and national experts, open communication and involvement of all staff in planning activities, and clear support for innovation.

> *"Every level of staff, direct service up to administration, and support staff, knows the mission of the organization and is very clear about the values...It is very different from many agencies that go wherever the money is."*
>
> *—funding source*

Organizations that are currently engaged in an organizational change process need to be careful to maintain focus on a clear goal and not be distracted by the change process.

The currently converting organizations have placed relatively less emphasis on closing a facility, and are not as clear about employment as the primary goal of the change effort, as were the original six sites. There is a stronger emphasis on broader outcomes such as community integration. In some cases, these organizations have also invested heavily in team development, sometimes without a clear overriding goal or expectations for outcomes. Finally, these change processes have been more likely to be influenced by external factors such as the availability of funding than the first six organizations.

Recommendations

For Organizations

- It is imperative that the consumers of the organization's services be involved in developing goals of the organization and share in the values that form these goals.
- Keep your eye on the prize: be clear about the outcome you are seeking. In particular, be careful not to over focus on the process of change and organizational restructuring. While restructuring may be an important strategy, it is not the purpose of change.
- Remember the most critical outcome is not the closure of a facility but consumer-driven employment with positive outcomes for the individual.
- Develop and support change agents throughout the organization since middle managers can play a critical role in this process. Middle managers and direct service staff should participate in strategic planning, training and other change activities.
- Whatever your approach (gradual or fast), be uncompromising once you set your goal.
- Focus on hiring staff who possess values consistent with the direction of the organization. People who understand the values of community employment can learn job development strategies, but a technically sound placement person who does not value individual choice and community inclusion is unlikely to learn these values.
- Support risk taking by staff members, which will allow them to be more creative and empowered. Within the parameters of safety for consumers as well as staff, encourage staff to try innovative strategies since many unexpected successes can occur.

Organizational Driven Change

- Establishing a clear goal and clear timeline for closure is a powerful tool in communicating the intent and maintaining accountability in a change process.
- Make a substantial investment of time and energy in engaging and communicating with stakeholder groups. This approach is necessary

if you are using an organizational change strategy with a clear, short, and reasonable deadline for closing a program. While all organizations need to communicate change effectively to stakeholders, it becomes even more critical when there is a clear decision to close a program quickly.

Conversion Driven by Individual Goals

- Use of a person-centered planning approach or holistic planning will focus change efforts on the hopes and dreams of an individual. These efforts then need to be incorporated into a specific placement plan
- Be careful not restrict an individual's options by labeling goals as unrealistic or that the job would be too difficult to find. Creativity and good connections in the community allow staff to develop jobs which might not immediately seem available.
- Do not allow the process of closing the workshop to extend indefinitely, or the organizational goal of closure may never be realized. Make clear policy changes such as stopping acceptance of new referrals for facility-based services. Acknowledge that some consumers may make a decision not to access community employment at this time and may need to receive services from other programs that continue to offer segregated services.

For External Stakeholders

- Seek a place at the table during change planning.
- Connect with other stakeholders (family, consumer groups, or funding agencies) to gain a broader perspective and to rally support for important ideas.
- Keep the pressure on. Pressure from consumers and families can drive organizations to change.
- Pay attention to the impact of the changes on the individual. Make sure that their needs are being met by these conversion efforts.
- Do not be forced into a choice between community experiences and quality outcomes. You want both a good job in the community and a job that is satisfying and meets the individual's goals.

References

Butterworth, J., Gilmore, D.S., Kiernan, W.E. & Schalock, R. (1998). Day and employment services in Developmental Disabilities: State and national trends. Boston: Institute for Community Inclusion (UAP).

McGaughey, M.J., Kiernan, W.E., McNally, L.C., Gilmore, D.S., & Keith, G.R. (1994). Beyond the workshop: National perspectives on integrated employment. Boston: Institute for Community Inclusion (UAP).

Acknowledgments

This brief reflects the contributions of staff at the Institute for Community Inclusion, in particular **Pat Connolly, David Hoff,** and **Marty Gold**, as well as representatives from the agencies who participated in this study.

For more information on this study, please contact **John Butterworth** at (617) 355-7074, <butterworth@a1.tch.harvard.edu>, or **Sheila Fesko** at (617) 355-6271, <fesko@a1.tch.harvard.edu>

For a publications brochure or general information, contact the Institute for Community Inclusion, Children's Hospital, 300 Longwood Avenue, Boston, MA 02115. (617)355-6506 voice; (617)355-6956 TTY; <ici@a1.tch.harvard.edu>

This document is supported, in part by a cooperative agreement, No. 90DN0032 from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Administration on Developmental Disabilities policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE